

# SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE FISCAL NOTE

**BILL NO.** Senate Bill 967

**PRINTER NO.** 1266

**AMOUNT**

No Fiscal Impact

**FUND**

General Fund

**DATE INTRODUCED**

December 10, 2021

**PRIME SPONSOR**

Senator Schwank

**DESCRIPTION**

Senate Bill 967 establishes the Women, Infants and Children State Advisory Board.

The bill is a freestanding act creating the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) State Advisory Board (board) to maximize the funding available for the Pennsylvania Special Supplemental Nutrition Program (SNAP) for WIC; to maximize enrollment to support healthier pregnancies and births and improved health in children in the Commonwealth; and to coordinate the programs that support them across state agencies.

Senate Bill 967 outlines the advisory duties of the WIC State Advisory Board to include the following:

- Advising the Department of Health (DOH) and other agencies serving lower-income and other eligible women and children in this Commonwealth;
- Advising on the operation of the programs to increase enrollment and utilization of the programs, including the following:
  - To study the feasibility of implementing a memorandum of understanding with the Department of Human Services (DHS) to streamline the enrollment process for eligible participants who are applying for SNAP or Medical Assistance; and
  - To utilize the COMPASS app to apply for health and human services programs and manage benefits information.
- Advising on the improvement of the quality of services to support WIC and other services to address social, health, educational and other needs of pregnant individuals, mothers, infants and toddlers;
- Developing an annual plan for outreach, including to immigrants and other underserved populations, and to increase enrollment by promoting outreach and enrollment in each region of the state through public-private partnerships;
- Advising on technology improvements and enhancements to be made using the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021;
- Advising on coordination and collation of services to improve efficiency and effectiveness of those services; and

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- Advising on planned policy, administrative changes and budget requests to obtain from the board prior to implementation.

The bill outlines other duties of the board to include the following:

- Review current aggregate data on WIC eligibility and enrollment at the regional level from DOH and DHS;
- Set outcome goals for enrollment and retention to collectively act through public-private partnerships to address improvement opportunities;
- Develop an annual action plan for DOH and DHS;
- Familiarize itself with the WIC Policy Manual and WIC State Plan to ensure all members are aware of existing efforts;
- Research best practices that are used in other states;
- Consult with agencies on what stakeholders could do to promote outreach, enrollment and connection to comprehensive services;
- Develop or disseminate outreach and educational materials to reduce the stigma around WIC;
- Coordinate a cohesive group across the Commonwealth to promote WIC across many channels and organizations that work with potential WIC participants to create a unified message; and
- Serve as a leverage point for ongoing initiatives benefitting women, infants and children.

The bill establishes the following members of the WIC State Advisory Board:

- Ex officio members of the board:
  - The Secretary of DOH or a designee;
  - The Secretary of DHS or a designee; and
  - The Director of WIC or a designee.
- Members of the board include one representative from each of the following:
  - A regional health care provider serving women, infants and children;
  - An obstetrician;
  - A pediatrician;
  - A licensed dietician;
  - A representative of a retail grocery store chain contracted with the Commonwealth to provide online sales;
  - A WIC program provider agency representative from each of the six regions as designated by the Commonwealth or national association of WIC agency providers; and
  - A consumer advocate with expertise in federally funded nutritional programs.

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- Additional members may at any time be appointed to the board as necessary to carry out its duties.

The bill stipulates that members of the board shall be appointed on an annual basis by the DOH Secretary for a term not to exceed three consecutive years. Vacancies of the board membership shall be filled in the same manner as provided for the original appointments. The board shall be staffed in collaboration with individuals from DOH, DHS and SNAP. The board may at any time create subcommittees to carry out specific tasks or research. Subcommittees are to be created on an ad hoc basis and are not to replace or interfere with the efforts of the board.

The bill outlines that the board shall meet no less than 10 times per year. Meeting agendas and all meeting minutes shall be posted to DOH's publicly accessible internet website. Meetings shall comply with the Right-to-Know Law.

This act shall take in 60 days.

## **FISCAL IMPACT:**

Senate Bill 967 will have no fiscal impact to the Commonwealth. Staffing to aid the board can be accomplished with current staffing levels within the Department of Health, Department of Human Services and SNAP.